
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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Ground Floor, State Capitol Building

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEETING — OCTOBER 2019

Meeting. The [Commission of Veterans Affairs](#) met on October 2, 2019, at the Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown. The Commission received presentations from members of the general public and updates from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office and Iowa VA Hospitals.

Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Update. Director Steve Lukan provided the following update:

- The Iowa Veterans Cemetery annual maintenance for trees and volunteer clean-up mulching has taken place. The pace of burials has been high, with 500 burials or internments taking place over the last three fiscal years.
- The Home Ownership Assistance Program is likely to run out of funds by the end of October or November 2019. A waiting list will be started after that. In FY 2019, the waiting list was started in October.
- County officer training will be held October 15-17, 2019.
- The Department has purchased the printer/copier, two computers, and operating systems that the Commission funded from the License Plate Fee Fund at the last meeting. The Department is also considering purchasing approximately 10 computers from the Department of Homeland Security surplus sale.
- The Director introduced the new Public Information Officer, Karl Lettow, who will also be acting in a liaison capacity during the legislative session.

Iowa Veterans Home (IVH) Update. Commandant Timon Oujiri of the IVH gave the following update:

- The current census is 504, which is 98.0% capacity. The IVH has been running at this capacity for the past six months. The current waitlist is 46 people, and the wait is 4-6 months. The average resident age is 77 years old (oldest 103, youngest 48). There are 35 World War II-era veterans, 59 Korean War-era veterans, 239 Vietnam War-era veterans, and 88 veterans from peacetime or the Gulf War.
- The IVH is working to establish a smoke-free facility policy for residents and staff at some point in the near future. Federal VA facilities instituted a smoke-free policy effective October 1, 2019.
- Dr. Joe Hoagbin was introduced as the new Medical Director for the IVH. The IVH is implementing a new physician staffing model where it will contract with UnityPoint Health for physicians rather than have physicians on staff. The Commandant reports there are still two physician assistants on staff.
- On items related to tornado recovery, final roof repairs are complete on one building, with another currently ongoing, and another roof repair planned after that. The Marshalltown High School Class of 1969 is also donating 50 trees to help replace the trees lost in the storm.
- The IVH is also working with Future Ready Iowa for staff recruiting and implementing teaching a Certified Nursing Assistant class with local schools.
- The Library of Congress Veterans History Project will be coming to the IVH to collect firsthand interviews and narratives of United States military veterans.

Other Business. The Commission reviewed administrative rules and circulated a draft application for requests from the License Plate Fee Fund. The Commission also plans to review the administrative rules for the Veterans Trust Fund during the next scheduled conference call. The Commission is also working to finalize proposals for its 2020 legislative agenda.

The Commission approved a funding request from the IVH totaling \$15,500 from the License Plate Fee Fund for the following:

- Up to \$12,300 for a commercial-grade outdoor Christmas tree and exterior lighting, subject to final procurement bids and the success or failure of securing other outside grants.
- Up to \$3,200 for promotional materials, including a new banner, recruiting fair handouts, new employee gifts, and IVH Challenge Coins.

The Commission also received two requests from the Iowa Association of County Commissioners and Veteran Service Officers.

- The first request was to amend the administrative rules for the Injured Veteran Grant Program to remove the eligibility requirement that an injured veteran be medically evacuated from a combat zone. The president of the Association reported that the Pentagon's policy has changed to a "golden hour" approach to injuries and that prior to 2014, 55.6% of combat zone injuries required medical evacuation, whereas after the implementation of the "golden hour" policy, 4.4% required medical evacuation. The Commission took no action but is taking the request under consideration.
- The second request was for approximately \$6,800 to assist with the hosting and maintenance of the Association's webpage to facilitate communication between counties, provide up-to-date information on current federal policies, facilitate online registration for the county commission of veterans affairs training program, and host online training. The Commission directed the Director of the DVA to see if funds in the county training program account would be eligible to pay for this. If that turned out to be impermissible or impractical, the Commission voted to pay for the expenses out of the License Plate Fee Fund.

Next Meeting. The next meeting will be held on January 8, 2020, at the Gold Star Museum at Camp Dodge in Johnston.

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